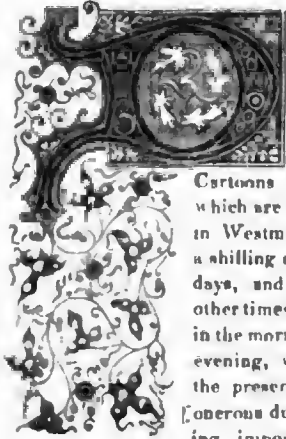


The Builder.

NO. LXXVI.

SATURDAY, JULY 20, 1844.



URING the time which has elapsed since public view was first given of the

Cartoons and Frescos which are now exhibiting in Westminster-hall, for a shilling each on Saturdays, and gratis at all other times, from 9 o'clock in the morning till 7 in the evening, we have up to the present time, by the generous duties of following important architectural

legislation, been unable to go into the merits of these works of art, which have been sent in, in order that a selection might be made of artists fit to have intrusted to them the care and honour, and, we trust, substantial profit, of decorating the new Houses of Parliament.

In the meanwhile, that selection has been made, and will, on the whole, we deem, be satisfactory. There are other artists among the exhibitors whose works are meritorious, and they may perhaps, upon further consideration, have confided to them some portions of the quantity of work, huge as we trust it must necessarily be.

The following is an account of the selections which have been made:—

The final meeting of the Commissioners of Fine Arts for the present season took place on Friday week, at Gwydyr House, Whitehall; when the opinion of that body on the merits of the respective artists contributing to the exhibition of fresco paintings and other works now on view in Westminster Hall, was formally pronounced by the selection of six individuals from among their number, whom it has been determined to commission to execute works on given subjects, for the decoration of the new Houses of Parliament.

The commissioners present were Viscount Palmerston, Lord Mahon, Lord Colborne, Mr. Macaulay, Mr. Gally Knight, Mr. Hawes, and Mr. Vivian. His Royal Highness Prince Albert, the President, and the other absent commissioners, having previously recorded their opinions in favour of the artists selected, no difficulty arose from their non-attendance, and some preliminary business having been transacted, the names of the successful competitors were declared as follows:—

Charles West Cope, Hyde Park-gate, Kensington-gore.

John Calcott Horsley, 1, High-row, Kensington Gravel-pits.

William Dyce, 1A, Royal-terrace, Adelphi-square.

Richard Redgrave, Hyde Park-gate, Kensington.

William Cave Thomas, 27, Baker-street, Portman-square.

Mr. Cope, the first-named gentleman, received a first-class prize of 300*l.* for his cartoon of the "First Trial by Jury," in the exhibition of 1843. He has only one subject in the present exhibition—a fresco marked No. 53 in the catalogue, and entitled "The Meeting of Jacob and Rachel."

Mr. Horsley received a second-class prize of 200*l.* in 1843 for his cartoon of "St. Augustine Preaching to Ethelbert, and Bertha, his Christian Queen." He has two frescos in

the present exhibition—the one, No. 9, entitled "Prayer," the border to which was designed and painted by Mr. Owen Jones; and the other, No. 63, entitled "Peace."

Mr. Dyce's name did not appear in the catalogue of the cartoon exhibition last year, but he has a subject among the frescos now exhibiting. It is marked No. 66 in the catalogue, and entitled, "Two Heads, from a Composition, representing the Consecration of Archbishop Parker in Lambeth Chapel, A.D. 1559."

Mr. MacIaie, the well-known artist, contributes to the present exhibition a fresco, unpretendingly described in the catalogue, "No. 74, The Knight."

Mr. Redgrave, a name also not appearing in the catalogue of 1843, is the artist of No. 51, among the frescos now exhibiting. It has excited considerable notice, and is entitled "Loyalty: Catherine Douglas, bearing the Door with her Arm to withstand the Assassins of James I. of Scotland."

Mr. Thomas was a successful competitor in 1843, having received an additional premium of 100*l.* for his cartoon of "St. Augustine preaching to the Britons." He contributes to the present exhibition three subjects: a cartoon, a fresco, and an oil painting, respectively marked—Nos. 52, 54, and 55.

The following is a copy of the circular addressed to each of the artists selected by her Majesty's Commissioners to execute certain designs for the decoration of the new Houses of Parliament:—

"Whitehall, July 15.

"SIR,—I have to acquaint you that her Majesty's Commissioners on the Fine Arts, with the sanction of the Lords Commissioners of her Majesty's Treasury, have resolved that six arched compartments in the House of Lords, each measuring 9 feet 3 inches wide by 16 feet high to the point of the arch, shall be decorated with fresco paintings; that the subjects of such fresco paintings shall be illustrative of the functions of the House of Lords, and of the relation in which it stands to the sovereign; that the subjects of three of the said fresco paintings shall be personifications or abstract representations of religion, justice, and the spirit of chivalry; and that the three remaining subjects corresponding with such representations, and expressing the relation of the Sovereign to the Church, to the law, and, as the fountain of honour, to the State, shall be—the Baptism of Ethelbert; Prince Henry, afterwards Henry V., acknowledging the authority of Chief Justice Gascoigne; and Edward the Black Prince receiving the Order of the Garter from Edward III.

"I have further to acquaint you that the commissioners have resolved, with the sanction of the Lord Commissioners of her Majesty's Treasury, to employ six artists, selected by the commissioners from the present exhibitors in Westminster Hall, to prepare designs for the subjects above-mentioned, and that the commissioners have selected you as one of the six artists to be so employed, under the following conditions:—

"You are required to prepare a cartoon, being a design for one of the aforesaid subjects. The size of the cartoon is to be 9 feet 3 inches wide, by 16 feet high to the point of the arch, and 10 feet 3 inches high to the springing of the arch (outlines in lithography, shewing the form of the arch in the compartments referred to, may be obtained at the architect's office; New Palace-yard). You are further required to prepare a coloured sketch, not less than 18 inches in its shortest dimension, of the entire design represented in your cartoon, and a specimen of fresco painting, not less than 3 feet in its shortest dimension, representing a part of the design in the full proportion.

"You are required to send in such cartoon, coloured sketch, and specimen of fresco painting, during the first week in June, 1845, for exhibition, to Westminster Hall.

"You are to be remunerated for the works aforesaid with the sum of 400*l.*; but the commissioners do not bind themselves to employ you finally on the fresco paintings in the House of Lords.

"I have further to acquaint you that the six subjects are distributed among the six artists as follows:—

"The subject of Religion is given to Mr. Horsley.

"The subject of Justice is given to Mr. Thomas.

"The subject of Chivalry is given to Mr. MacIaie.

"The subject of the Baptism of Ethelbert is given to Mr. Dyce.

"The subject of Prince Henry, afterwards Henry V., acknowledging the authority of Chief Justice Gascoigne, is given to Mr. Redgrave.

"The subject of Edward the Black Prince receiving the Order of the Garter from Edward III. is given to Mr. Cope.

"I have further to acquaint you that, although the six subjects are required to be undertaken by and among the six artists, the artists are at liberty to exchange subjects; and that, although the commission given to each artist is for one only of the aforesaid subjects, each artist is at liberty to treat any other of the said subjects, in addition to the one subject, which he is commissioned to undertake.

"I have further to acquaint you that a general competition is invited among artists for designs for the same subjects, to be prepared by the time before specified; and that the six commissioned artists are not allowed to be competitors for the premiums offered for such designs.

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"C. L. EASTLAK, Secretary."

It will be observed, from the last paragraph of this letter, that a general competition is invited; and as an encouragement to artists who have not been selected, the commissioners offer three premiums of 200*l.* each, for the best subjects produced. Thus another exhibition, perhaps exceeding in interest those already opened, will take place in the summer of next year. Advertisements, also, have been issued, offering premiums amounting to 3,000*l.* for designs painted in oil.

On the whole, those who have had their fears relative to the execution of fresco will, we imagine, not be disappointed, either by the exhibition or the selection. We think some one grand subject, requiring the expression of vast space and multitude, the management of the long-drawn perspective of cathedral architecture, or the gigantic effect of Druidical remains, should be given to John Martin, so that posterity may have preserved, in an honourable place, some good picture of that clever man's work.

With regard to fresco painting, we think a great improvement might be made upon it by rendering it in fact fresco-mosaic, the whole substance, except the rough under-ground-work of the plastering, being worked to the shape of the cartoon with different coloured plasters, and with only the finer parts of the finish done in fact in fresco; this would prevent, in a great measure, the damage by chipping, whereby some of the trial-pieces have already suffered.

In the cartoons, we observe the same defect as in almost every thing else which has been exhibited for selection for the Houses of Parliament, viz. a want of propriety to the purpose in architecture and ornament. How very defective our schools of painting and sculpture are in this particular we must lament, because while this is the case, great danger exists that patrons will force upon the architect, against the sternness of his firm taste and belief, subjects which, by being inappropriate for the purpose. In fact, designers, painters, and workers generally, now Gothic architecture has been so much revived, require to be in many cases re-educated, in order to do their work in a style right for such purposes.

We now proceed to give our own judgment upon the subjects of trial.

1. Encounter between Caesar and Cambrinus on the Banks of the Thames, second invasion. (Cartoon.) 15 ft. wide, 9 ft. high. By Henry Melling.

This subject is well painted, forming a